

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and Congresswoman Melissa Bean today met with the CEO of Canadian National (CN), E. Hunter Harrison, to discuss their concerns over the company's purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railway (EJ&E). Although Harrison pledged to look into the situation and report their findings, the lawmakers said they remain concerned that the issues they raised were not resolved.

"While I am encouraged by the fact that Mr. Harrison has personally agreed to meet with us, there was a lack of any commitment," said Durbin. "This leaves the future of Illinois Amtrak service and Metra's STAR Line in danger. And many Illinois communities and commuters stand to lose if this deal goes through as proposed."

"Mr. Harrison presented why this transaction is good for their business model, but he continues to show indifference to the burden on the suburban communities throughout Illinois in terms of increased traffic, safety issues, quality of life, and the undue tax burden associated with supporting this private transaction," said Bean. CN has only submitted projections for increased freight traffic for the first three years following the transaction. During the meeting, Bean requested clarity from Harrison on what the increased traffic would be after that period. Harrison agreed to provide those projections.

CN has submitted a proposal seeking regulatory approval from the STB to acquire a major portion of the 198-mile EJ&E, which operates a mainline that encircles Chicago and reaches Waukegan, Joliet and South Chicago and Gary, Indiana. The purchase, currently under review by the Surface Transportation Board, would result in up to a 400 percent increase in rail traffic along the EJ&E line, which cuts through many suburban Chicago communities. CN plans to move trains from its already crowded railroads to the EJ&E Railway have sparked concerns over safety and congestion in towns along the affected route.

Durbin and Bean also cautioned that a purchase by CN of the EJ&E railroad without specific conditions would effectively eliminate a CN rail line critical to the operation of six daily Amtrak trains. This action would put at serious risk Amtrak service to Champaign and Carbondale, one of the fastest growing Amtrak lines in the nation. Additional concern was raised over the impact the sale would have on congestion and crossings and the future of Metra's STAR line.

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